

CUNZIERTON

Cunzierton (1540), Cunzeirton, Cunziertoun, Cunyertoun, Cungiertoun, Cunzearton, Cunzeartoune (c1537), Cundrestine, or Cuniardon (1468) refers to a place or an area in the Cheviot Hills at Oxnam in Roxburghshire (Scotlands Borders).

The following Cunzierton localities can be found on maps or in texts – Cunzierton Farm, Cunzierton Burn, Cunzierton Hill and Cunzierton Fort.

The great Roman Road ‘after skirting Cunzierton and passing to the south of Shibden Hill, continues its course in the same direction, and now in a perfectly straight line, past Cappuck, where it crosses Oxnam Water to Bonjedward...’

It is thought that the name denotes an animal and came from Old French *conniniere* meaning ‘rabbit warren’. [Place names and the Scots language... M R Scott – University of Saltford, Manchester 2007].

James Hardy described Cunzierton Hill in 1885 – “is a steep bare green dry porphyritic hill, slightly craggy on the upper part, and having a rocky and grassy top spread out into a considerable area, which is encircled by a moderately elevated single camp ring, with its accompanying outer and inner trenches and entered by a road on the NW side. There is on the south border, an oblong walled compartment such as is usually reckoned to be a cattle fold, that may be more modern than the camp, and one or two shallow depressions like the floor of hut-circles...It is extremely cold up here and fully exposed to the wind. About 50 yards lower where the ascent is easiest, an additional mound of defence is apparent. Many other of the truncated hill tops around here have their crowns ringed with entrenchments. The fort ‘occupying the height southward of Bloodylaws is the most conspicuous...’ We looked down on Cunzierton steading, which consists of only a few houses: there were some trees marking an older place in a lower position. The name Cunzierton may signify the King’s garth (Cunnings-garth): or the Coney-garth or warren...” [History of the Berwickshire Naturalists’ Club – Volume 11].

“On the hill at Cunzierton...the outlines of a strongly fortified British Station may be clearly traced. It consists of a large rampart, with double trenches surrounding the level area on the summit; and about fifty yards lower, where the ascent is easier, an additional mound of defence is likewise apparent. Besides, there is the remains of a Roman encampment most distinctly visible upon a somewhat commanding eminence called Pennymuir...” [The New Statistical Account – Scotland: Roxburgh, Peebles, Selkirk – 1845].

From Scotlands Places (1858-1860) – Cunzierton Fort – a British Station. “An oblong Entrenchment on the Summit (summit) of Cunzierton Hill. Supposed to be the remains of one of those Ancient places of fortification used by the British. It is generally supposed to be the remains of a Roman Camp”.

Canmore - <https://canmore.org.uk/site/58009/cunzierton-hill>

There are conflicting interpretations as to whether the camp was British or Roman. I think that it appears that it was initially a Roman Camp.

Two ancient axes have been found at Cunzierton. One of the axes was made of green aventurine. [Scotland in Pagan Times:The Bronze and Stone Ages].

A jadeite axe from Cunzierton farm is in the National Museum of Antiquities in Scotland. It is curved and has a very highly polished surface.

Two polished jade axes from Cunzierton Farm are in the NMAS. One was ploughed up about 1882 and was donated by A Stavert in 1908...The other was found in 1899 and is on loan from the Royal Scottish Academy - <https://canmore.org.uk/site/58015/cunzierton-farm>

Cunzierton was once a stronghold of the Douglasses -

- In 1540 Cunzierton was associated with William Douglas of Bonjedward.
- There is said to be no trace of William’s 1540 home at Cunzierton in the Cheviot Hills – “There is now no trace of William Douglas of Bonjedward’s house at Cunzeirton in the Cheviot Hills, but of its razing and the theft of his cattle in 1540 (cited in Armstrong, 1883, LI,

App. XXXIV) we have the following record: ‘Thai come apou the XXI day of November last bypast, to his house of Cunzertoun, with ledderis, spadis, schobs, gavelockis and axis, cruellie assegit, brak and undirmyndit the said place, to have wynnyn the samyn, and tuik his cornis, and caist to the yettis, and brynt thairin VIIJ ky and oxin, and spulyeit and tuik away with thaim XXVJ ky and oxin, an horss...’ (Zeune 1992)

- “Zeune mistakenly ascribes Cunzeirton to Dumfriesshire with the suffix ‘DF’ each time it is mentioned, however, the grid reference provided in the index (NT 741 180) is correct and the house would have been up in the Cheviots with a direct route from Douglas’s seat in Bonjedward (near Jedburgh) along Dere Street.
- Zeune (1992) supposes that Cunzeirton must have been a pele-house or bastle with livestock kept in the ground floor otherwise eight cattle and oxen ‘therein’ would not have been lost. In general, however, the livestock may have been kept on the property or ‘place’ rather than in the house itself. Given that this record is an official complaint lodged by Douglas against English reivers, it may have been exaggerated in the hope of compensation for 34 animals rather than the 26 that may be recovered...” [The Laird’s Houses of Scotland ...1560-1770. PhD by Research – Sabina R Strachan – University of Edinburgh 2008].
- In 1537 “Andrew and John Hall were denounced as rebels for not underlying the law of art? and of the inbringing of certain Englishmen to the place of William Douglas of Cunzeartoune, and Percy Hall and others found caution to answer for the burning of Cunzeartoune. Although it is in the parish of Oxnam, Cunzeartoune seems latterly to have been in the barony of Hounam (Hounum/Hownam)...” [History of the Berwickshire Naturalists’ Club, Volume 11].
- This is relevant to the paragraph above –
In 1510 Robert Hall a notorious villain from Heavyside appeared in the Jedburgh Court accused of a long list of crimes. One such crime was stealing a cow and 11 hogs from the Laird of Bon-Jedward. In 1537 sheep were stolen from William Douglas. “Andrew Hall, called ‘Fat Cow’ and William Hall ‘Wanton Pintle’ were denounced rebels for

stealing sheep from William Douglas of Bon Jedward and his neighbours..." They also stole corn from Douglasses' place at Cunzierton. Another Hall rebel was John Hall and he was called 'Wide Hose' from 'the amplitude of his breeches'. It appears that the raid where the sheep were stolen 'ended in serious reprisals' for all these men 'were slain later by the Douglasses'.

- It also appears that in 1537 Andrew and John Hall stole from William's farm at Cunzierton rather than at Bonjedward. If there were reprisals by the Douglasses it seems that it was for theft by the Halls and for the Halls leading others to the home of William Douglas at Cunzierton which resulted in its razing and wanton destruction. Plus, as a reprisal for the theft of cattle and oxen which William Douglas claimed as 34 in number.

"In 1605 James Stewart who served as heir to his brother Sir William Stewart of Traquair, in one half of the lands and barony of Hounan, commonly called Fillogar (Philogar) and Cunzearton. ..." [History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, Volume 11].

In September, 1696 William Douglas of Cunzierton represented Roxburgh as did Douglas of Bonjeward (they were separate individuals). It was about legislation 'Act anent the supply of eighteen month's cess upon land rent'. (Parliamentary Register – Edinburgh).

In another entry in 1696 along with 'Douglafs of Bonjedburgh', 'William Douglafs of Cungiartoun' was listed for Roxburgh. ['Acta Parliamentorum Gulielmi'].

'William Douglas of Cunyertoun' was on the Roxburghshire Land Tax Roll between 1645 and 1831. (Scotlands Places).

In 1691 to 1695, four persons paid Hearth Tax at Cunyertoun. (Scotlands Places).

In the reign of George III (1760 onwards) there was a 'Reverend James Douglas of Cunzierton'. [Anno Regni Georgii III. Regis...]

Around 1770 there was a 'Dr Douglas of Cunzierton' [A Directory of Landownership in Scotland – Loretta R Timperley 1976].

In the mid to late 1880's Archibald Stavert was at Cunzierton. [NLS Directories - online].

Cunzierton Hill – “A Considerable height on the Cunzierton farm the property of Mr Stavert (Scotlands Places – 1858-1860). This implies that Cunzierton farm extended to the Cunzierton Hill.

In 1992 John Henderson stated that 'Cunzierton Farm is owned by the Misses Douglas who live at Swinside Hall'.

Deeds relating to the lands of Cunziertoun –

Box 5, Bundle 1 – 1632, 1633, 1647, 1671, 1672, 1690, 1691, 1693, 1694, 1711, 1713

Box 5, Bundle 2 – 1718, 1721, 1723, 1727, 1730, 1731, 1739, 1748, 1750

1694 – Hugh Scott of Gala and Christian (Douglas) sister of William Douglas of Cunziertoun.

Inventories of Writs – Cunziertoun 1713

[National Library of Scotland – Inventory Acc.6803 – Douglas of Cavers Papers].

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